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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BAGHDAD 002425

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SUBJECT: TROUBLED AL-ANBAR'S PRDC OFF TO A GOOD START

Classified By: ACTING POLCOUNS HENRY S. ENSHER. REASONS 1.4
(B) AND (D).

1. (C) SUMMARY: The Anbar Provincial Reconstruction Development Committee (PRDC) held its first official meeting May 29 in Ramadi. Local officials from across the province and directors-general from various ministries attended the session, reflecting genuine and broad interest in the PRDC initiative. Several participants primarily used the forum to complain about the lack of reconstruction progress -- a longstanding theme; others came prepared with detailed project proposals in hand. Some flagged their concerns about the disproportionate attention, and resources, directed toward Fallujah in comparison to other cities. Anbar Provincial Council Chairman Ma'moun urged the attendees to focus on projects, not offer complaints. He said the body would meet weekly and work to prioritize proposals for funding in line with the troubled province's most urgent needs. END SUMMARY.

ANBAR PRDC: HIGH TURNOUT

2. (C) City and ministry representatives from across Anbar attended the province's opening PRDC meeting May 29, in Ramadi. Iraqi participants included: the mayors of Rutbah and Al-Waleed; Directors-General from Habbaniyah, Kubaysah and Al-Wafa; Deputy Mayor of Ramadi and city council chairmen from Habbaniyah, Hit, and Phurat. U.S. participants included SET Fallujah and Baghdad PoloffS, Baghdad IRMO representative, MNF-I Political Military Economic Effects officers, 2nd Marine Division Chief of Staff, Marine Government Support Team (GST) Commander and S-2/Foreign Area Officer.

3. (C) The provincial council chairman, Engineer Ma'moun, urged participants to take advantage of the initiative to direct resources to areas vital to the provincial leadership. Acting Governor Taleb underscored the importance of new cooperation between local provincial officials and the coalition; mistakes had been made in the past but should not be repeated.

PRIORITIES MIXED WITH COMPLAINTS

4. (C) PRDC participants underscored key priorities by sector (Directors-General) and location (city mayors and/or chairmen) to include:

--HEALTH: The Director General of the Ministry of Health Rafe Hyad Chiad observed that committee was not needed to underscore that health conditions throughout the province were "very bad." In Fallujah, several health problems had been resolved; he opined this might serve as a model. More medical staff and ambulances were needed. Of the eleven hospitals in the region, most were in poor condition; the needs of the 140 clinics were also great.

--EDUCATION: The Education Ministry's DG, Engineer Fadhl al Saleh claimed that Ramadi suffered especially due to repeated, "coalition attacks on schools. Of the 1,150 schools in the area, all needed some repairs; he noted there was no budget for new school construction. (Comment: Schools in Ramadi have been used by insurgents to coordinate attacks. End Comment.)

--ELECTRICITY: Engineer Ziad Hamman representing the Ministry of Electricity outlined two necessary steps: reestablishing distribution grids, including new material (wires and generators) and building a new station in Ramadi as priorities.

--SEWAGE: DG Engineer Ahmed Hattam Hamad, responsible for sewers, cited his priority as rebuilding lines and installing new pumps, referring to a written list of priorities for the Ministry of Water.

--RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS: Ramadi Sunni Endowment Director, Ali K. al Zand said religious centers in Fallujah and Ramadi require rebuilding.

--RUTBAH: The Mayor of Rutbah, Lawyer Raheem Sabah Barwani, commented security in the area for the last year had been stable and coordination with the coalition effective. He emphasized that during the last two months, the security situation had begun to deteriorate. Without improved security, all progress would be lost. Health and electrical priorities had been identified; the most urgent issue remained a lack of water.

--AL-WALEED: Waleed City Council member Sa'ad revealed that the small city lacked an electrical grid; power came from generators only. Like other low population centers, it had lacked resources for a long time. He urged the situation be rectified.

--HABBANIYAH: The Mayor claimed there had been "no results" between coalition forces for some time. Water, roads and other services were "very weak"; schools were "a disaster" - many had their roofs falling in. The area had recently suffered from over 1,000 cases of severe diarrhea; asbestos leakage into water continued to be a primary health concern.

--RAMADI: Deputy Mayor of Ramadi, Sa'ad argued coalition roadblocks were causing problems. According to the acting mayor, all who enter Ramadi considered it to be "an abandoned city"; it had become "a dump" due to absent garbage collection. Sa'ad claimed most sewage ran into the river, creating widespread health problems. He decried the fact that the city's glass factory, which had just recently reopened, was temporarily shut down again. (Note. The temporary closure is due to the fact insurgents had used the site for direct and indirect fire on Coalition Forces. End Note.)

--HIT: City Council Chairman Kamel Dahih Mohammed emphasized that, as a city far from the provincial center (Ramadi), Hit had been ignored and given a low priority. He further opined, "for the last ten months, problems have been discussed without solutions." Health supplies would last only three days; conditions in hospitals were "miserable", the representative added.

-KUBAYSAH: City Council Chairman recounted that Kubaysah had "endless problems - he could not list them all." He began with "no pure water, no electricity, failing sewage network, not even 100 meters of paved roads, and destroyed schools". (COMMENT: the Kubaysah rep then quoted 4th century and 17th century references to the city as a model community - far from its present day condition.)

-FURAT: City Council Chairman Sheikh Jubaer al Nimrawi pointed out three outstanding problems: police salaries, 2,180 officers had not been paid in five months; water, approximately 500 houses lacked potable water; and severe shortages of equipment in clinics.

FALLUJAH-CENTRIC FUNDING

15. (C) Several representatives, notably the Habbiniyah official, complained that Fallujah had received a disproportionate share of government funds and attention. (Note. Two of the PC reps are from Fallujah, and several Fallujah leaders attended the PRDC session. End Note.) The IRMO representative noted that the ITG had decided that Fallujah reconstruction projects would remain a separate category, with its own funding stream, given the unique nature of the rebuilding task in the city following Operation Al-Fajr. SET Poloff also underscored that he had stressed in numerous meetings with Fallujah leaders that reconstruction successes were also necessary in the rest of the province, not only in Fallujah. A one-city strategy would not work.

16. (C) Comment. The attention paid to Fallujah represents a growing point of friction in the province. Many Anbar residents question why the notorious city should be rewarded with new investment and ITG resources, particularly after Fallujans had allowed insurgents to overrun it. The PRDC, in this way, could serve as a timely platform for other Anbar communities to leverage resources more widely.

17. (C) While much of the first PRDC session elicited extensive complaints about the lack of reconstruction progress throughout Anbar, Ma'moun effectively blunted the criticisms. He stressed that PRDC priorities,

determined by local officials, represented an opportunity that should be seized.

18. (C) Representatives from smaller Anbar communities predictably urged fairer distribution of resources, in line with the center-periphery splits apparent in most parts of the world. The most effective presenters (a minority) came to the meeting prepared, with completed project files in hand. Several traveled extensive distances to attend the session, which is noteworthy. ITG officials have made clear that they expect local officials to take advantage of the PRDC structure and send appropriate representation in all future meetings. End Comment.

19. (U) REO HILLA, REO BASRA, REO MOSUL, and REO KIRKUK, minimize considered.

Jeffrey